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AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
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ABSTRACT

In light of the amount of violence reported in public media and increasing rudeness of public behavior, it is imperative that elementary school students learn to care for other human beings. This paper makes recommendations for developing an elementary school curriculum of caring. The paper recommends three categories of objectives--knowledge, skills, and attitudes--and a variety of learning opportunities to accommodate students' learning styles. Recommended teaching methods include videotapes, the Internet, collaborative and project methods, and individual study. The paper presents a history of the philosophy of caring, focusing on the categorical imperative of Kant as a central thesis for human morality. The paper identifies situations in which elementary school students may engage in caring behavior. It is argued that caring for others may not be emphasized in students when their basic needs are not met, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs is presented as a set of criteria to assist in understanding what people need and want. The paper describes role models as important in developing caring persons and suggests that educational personnel also need to develop a philosophy of putting people first. It is suggested that an intensive experience of caring for others may also have a profound effect on youth; examples include working with senior citizens or tutoring young children. The paper recommends that the area of interpersonal intelligence, as identified in Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, should be emphasized in the curriculum. Finally, the paper notes that the history of a caring philosophy may be seen in several statements of educational principles developed by the National Education Association. (KB)

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TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY, KIRKSVILLE
(formerly Northeast Missouri State University)

From the Desk of

Dr. Marlow Ediger, Professor of Education

Route 2, Box 38, Kirksville, Missouri 63501

Phone (660) 665- 2342, Fax (660) 627-7363

Member of Editorial Boards --Education, Reading Improvement, Experiments in Education, The Progress of Education, The Educational Review, The Journal of English Language Teaching, and Foreign Correspondent for the Himalayan Journal of Educational Research, in India.

Specialist, speaker, and writer in Education.

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Marlow Ediger

CARING and the ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM

Much is written in journal articles and speeches given at teacher-education education conventions about pupils developing positive feelings in caring for others. There appears to be so much violence in society reported in newspapers and news magazines. Thus murders, rapes, mugging, robbery, breaking and entering, and threats to do bodily harm almost appear to be the order of the day. Less serious are rudeness, intimidations, shaking the clenched fist, and yelling at others. Thus, it is imperative that pupils learn to care for other human beings.

Developing the Curriculum

Involved faculty members need to develop the curriculum of caring. Democracy as a way of life in establishing objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures needs to be in the offing. Thus, individuals affected by the decision are involved in making the decisions.

For objectives, I recommend three categories; these are knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Knowledge objectives should stress what is relevant and vital for pupils to achieve. Knowledge acquired must be put to use. This involves skills objectives whereby learners apply what has been learned. The third category of objectives stresses attitudes. With quality attitudes, pupils have an inward desire to accept and assist others in a caring situation. Good altitudes should also guide pupils to achieve knowledge and skills objectives at a more optimal rate.

To achieve objectives, a variety of learning opportunities need to be in the offing. The teacher needs to provide for individual differences so each pupil may achieve more optimally. Learning styles possessed by pupils individually need careful consideration. Thus internet, computerized programs, videotapes, resource persons, cassettes, and reading materials, among others, need to be available to learners. Individual study, collaborative endeavors, project methods, problem

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solving, learning centers, and laboratory approaches may be used as learning opportunities.

Evaluation procedures should include role playing, creative and formal dramatics, use of puppetry, journal writing, portfolios, and log entries. A comprehensive system of evaluation of pupil achievement needs to be stressed. The results form evaluation are to be used in improving the curriculum for each pupil.

How Can Pupils Care for Each Other?

I believe pupils need to perceive values involved in caring for others. Many pupils seem to feel, "Why should I care for someone else and what will I get in return?" Individuals survive if people work together. Thus, in areas such as the following, survival is possible when caring is involved: blood transfusions are needed; infants need nurture to grow up and become independent; indigents need food, clothing, and shelter; older citizens need care when they no longer can take care of themselves; tragedy comes to most people in one form or another in one's lifetime; ill health is the lot of numerous persons; job loss hits many people; and homes and property are destroyed in natural disasters. Life is uncertain and fraught with chance factors. It is necessary then to having a caring attitude. Then too, it is uncomfortable to work with people what are unkind, rude, hostile, and inconsiderate. A society can be developed whereby feelings toward each other cloud be quite positive and helpful. However, at the present time, life can be brutish at times. and yet, there are caring people in any society. The Good Samaritans are out there in the societal arenas. There are numerous people who give of their time freely and work in food pantries, soup kitchens, meals on wheels, clothing distribution centers, and places of shelter for the needy.

My interest in caring for others was truly tested during the 1952-54 years when serving as a relief worker and teacher with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in the Nation of Jordan in the Middle East. That same area is now the West Bank of the Jordan. There were 40,000 refugees in Aqaba Camp and 38,000 in Ein Sultan Camp living directly

north and south reactively of Jericho where the MCC center was located. I assisted in wrapping bundles of clothing for refugee families based on lists of persons provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). A team of MCC workers and I distributed the wrapped bundles of clothing to refugees in these camps. The camps consisted of mud dried brick homes with mud plastered branches used for roofs. Open sewers was the rule with no pipes used. Water was carried in by refugee women with clay pots on their heads from Elisha's' fountain in Jericho. Before this time in Jericho, a coworker and myself whitewashed caves and homes for refugees in Bethany. This made the caves and homes better lighted than would otherwise be the case. There were twenty seven people living in one cave! Food and fuel for cooking by refugees in Bethany as well as near Jericho was furnished by UNRWA.

From these experiences, I realized how dependent we are on each other to survive. We do need to assist each other in order to survive. As I am typing this manuscript, I feel comfortable with a good pension from university teaching and social security benefits. The health insurance benefits for my wife and myself also are quite adequate. I do think back many times of refugees left behind and there are numerous refugee camps still in evidence on the West Bank and throughout the Middle East. Before losing everything and becoming refugees, some had been quite wealthy and never would have believed this could happen to them.

History of Philosophy and Caring

Epicurus (341-270 BC) believed in life being so uncertain that it was not worth striving for wealth. He believed that the wealth could be taken away quickly from anyone through human and natural disasters. Epicurus then believed in living extremely modestly with bread and milk as food for nourishment together with having friends who were free from a disastrous life. These friends would have good minds to discuss and meditate on the positive side of life. Beyond having the necessities of life, Epicurus believed in resisting the desire of owning much property and wealth; these could be lost quickly due to human or natural

disasters. The vain striving for wealth would then have been a waste of time. Epicurus' thinking about life being uncertain is understandable. When I was in the fifth grade, for example, mother had a disabling stroke which left here speechless, paralyzed on the right hand side, and unable to follow conversation. She died twenty-two years later in this same kind of vegetative state. My father, one brother, one sister, and I then took care of her; she would not have survived one day without assistance from us as well as from doctors and nurses.

I disagree with Epicurus in shunning difficult situations in life. I can understand why people do so. Individuals do want to live a life of enjoyment and fun. They do not want to view the unpleasant. The Good Samaritan faces difficult situations head on. There are so many people with problems and we need to care for them.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) advocated the Categorical Imperative as a central thesis of human morality. The Categorical Imperative is much like the Golden Rule and sates that "Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." Kant believed this maximum to be an "ought," and not a voluntary action or deed. The Categorical Imperative was a priori, that is it has always been true and is not due to human experiences. Thus, Kant would not shy away from what is undesirable, but rather act in a manner in which you, the other person, would want to be treated. A major item here stresses caring and helping others. The self centered person would focus upon the self in terms of what is wanted and desired. The Categorical Imperative focuses also upon the needs of others in the societal arenas. Each person has free will and therefore should choose the good which is the Categorical Imperative (Sahakian, 1968).

Pupils at a very young age may choose the Categorical Imperative. Under which situations, as examples, may pupils select to engage in caring behavior? Student teachers and cooperating teachers, whom I have supervised in the public schools, have guided pupils to do the following:

1. They may help another pupil to obtain background information in order to complete an assignment. Clear, concise explanations may

assist pupils to understand and attach meaning to needed ideas so that a workbook assignment may be completed.

2. A pupil may read orally to one or more pupils in order that that the latter may master unknown words as they follow along in their readers.

3. A child may befriend a pupil who is a classroom isolate.

4. Pupils individually or collectively work toward peaceful means of resolving conflicts.

5. Selected pupils volunteer to read to and visit with senior citizens in a nearby nursing home.

6. One child shared his noontime meal from a lunch bucket with a pupil who had forgotten to bring lunch to school!

7. A pupil volunteered to assist another child with the weekly list of spelling words. The latter had difficulty in spelling words correctly.

8. When prizes ran out as rewards for spelling words correctly, one pupil volunteered to let another have the remaining award.

9. One pupil shared a cupcake voluntarily at a class birthday party when too few were brought to school.

10. In choosing members for a committee in working on a thematic project, one pupil volunteered to drop out of her chosen project to work with two pupils who lacked participants in the project method.

The above named ten items might well be the beginning of meeting caring education standards. Sequentially, the caring curriculum needs to build or scaffold upon what a pupil or team of learners has achieved and exhibited.

I have always felt that unless basic needs of people are met, caring for others may not be emphasized. The late A. H. Maslow (1954) left, what I feel, a set of criteria which assists in understanding what people need and want. The lowest level of basic needs, but extremely important, are physiological. Thus, individuals need adequate nutrition, shelter, clothing, and sleep/rest. At one time or another, perhaps we have felt food is the only important item when being extremely hungry. The same an be said of the other physiological needs.

Next, Maslow stressed safety needs. No one can achieve well if he/she feels a lack of safety. The pupil who experiences sex and/or verbal abuse cannot feel safe. Nor can the pupil who is picked on by others on the playground. Teachers and administrators need to work in the direction of having safe school areas.

The third need emphasized by Maslow was belonging needs. All of us have noticed pupils who are loners and are not a part of the group, be it the classroom of playground. In school, there are many people and numerous interactions that occur among individuals. A pupil who is not accepted by others is in an uncomfortable position. Teachers need to work in the direction of pupils caring for each other so that belonging needs are met.

Fourth, Maslow stressed esteem needs that pupils have and these should be met. I have observed teachers who never try to find out what a pupil excels in and this needs to be brought out so that others have a chance to value these talent(s). I have talked to many adults who feel that what they have to offer civic groups and religious organizations is not wanted and not prized. Thus a person plays the baritone horn well, but is not asked to perform in groups and organizations. We feel left out if talents are not appreciated that one has.

Fifth, Maslow emphasized the concept of "self actualization." Here, the individual becomes he kind of person desired. I do believe people tend to want to be known for being altruistic and caring. The caring curriculum must stress pupils realizing self actualization. Each of the above named standards, emphasized by Maslow, stresses a curriculum in caring for others. We are not an island unto the self only.

The role model is important in being caring persons. Teachers, principals, and other school workers need to develop a philosophy of putting people first, not things nor wealth. The human being has intrinsic worth and is to be valued above that of pupils achieving high standards in the cognitive domain or doing well on tests, be they district, sate, or national. Thus there needs to be role models stressing a caring philosophy.

I visit Old Order Amish schools once a week , near rural Bloomfield, Iowa. Old Order Amish (Ediger,1997) are known for their feelings of concern for others. If a member of their own fold experiences disasters, other Old Order Amish pitch in to help. Thus if a barn is destroyed from a disaster, neighbors assist in rebuilding the barn in a few days. If illness sets in and adults cannot work, Amish neighbors will do the field work or household work. All of this is done without charge. There is a feeling of responsibility toward others of their own fold. Sometimes, Old Order Amish men will help a non-Amish person build a barn or other structure that has been destroyed from lightening or strong winds.

I believe one can best observe how role models are highly effective in teaching. Amish children tend to become like their parents in dress, languages spoken (High German and Pennsylvania Dutch), religious beliefs adhered to, goals desired for fulfillment, customs, and occupations followed. It is relatively easy to observe here how the offspring model themselves after their parent and grandparents.

Teachers, Principals, and other school workers should always realize they are models for pupils to emulate.

Some researchers hypothesize that an intensive experience in coring for others may have a profound affect on young people. There are many possible ways for young people in becoming in the community in a meaningful and contributing role: working with senior citizens, caring for or tutoring young children, working in service learning placements in health and community programs, and taking part in in other types of volunteer activities.Those young people who have opportunities to care for others in such programs have been found to show an increased sense of social responsibility, a higher level of self esteem, better school attendance, and a decrease in depression. These care giving experiences might also affect students' plans to enter such helping professions as counseling, social work, or teaching (Chaskin and Rauner,1995).

Dr. Howard Gardner (1993) advocates the Theory of Multiple Intelligences in which he has identified seven intelligences that people

possess. These are; verbal/linguistic; logical/mathematical; visual/spatial; musical; bodily/kinesthetic; interpersonal; and intrapersonal. The area of interpersonal intelligence should be stressed thoroughly in the caring curriculum. Many worthwhile objectives that emphasize respect, acceptance, empathy, sympathy, belonging, humanness, liking, interaction, cooperation, collaboration, harmonious endeavors, tact, courtesy, valuing others, harmonizing efforts, affective ends, wholesome attitudes, positive feelings, assisting others, concern for people, conscience, and human worth should be in evidence in he classroom. Garner believes strongly that pupils should have ample opportunities to indicate subject matter learned through strengths possessed. Those possessing interpersonal strengths then need to work with others in completing tasks and projects. All pupils, however, should achieve objectives pertaining to the interpersonal dimension involving the other six categories of intelligence as advocated by Gardner.

There has been a rather long history in American education in which a caring philosophy has been stressed. The Seven Cardinal Principles of Education (National Education Association, 1918) emphasized the following concepts for pupils to achieve as objectives: health, command of fundamental processes (the basics in the curriculum), worthy home membership, vocational competence, citizenship, worthy use of leisure time, and ethical character. When viewing the preceding concepts, it is quite obvious that much can be done to stress caring in the following areas: worthy home membership, citizenship, worthy use of leisure time, and ethical character. However, could caring be emphasized equally so in health education, command of fundamental processes or the basics in the curriculum, in vocational classes as well as in the work place in the future? Too frequently, impolite behavior and rudeness are in evidence in the work place as well as in the curriculum.

The Educational Policies Commission (National Education Association, 1938) stress four broad objective in their publication <u>The Purposes of Education in American Democracy.</u> These four areas were

1. Self realization
2. Human relations
3. Economic efficiency
4. Civic responsibility. I will comment briefly on category two above. Here, the writer states that the educated person puts good human relations first, above all other objectives. To have good human relations, I would say that caring for others is very important. The indifferent, aloof, and noninteractive person tends to be an individual who will have difficulties getting along with others.

In Conclusion

A caring curriculum seems to be necessary in teaching and learning. Harmony and harmonious relationships are needed in school and in society. Individuals achieve more optimally when the school climate is positive in pupil interaction and learning. Working together for the good of all pupils in a classroom represents democracy as a way of life. It also stresses quality attitudes being emphasized by learners. To indicate what is truly important in the curriculum, Miehl (1996) stressed those experiences that would assist pupils to develop group membership skills. Second, we must help learners extend their life-space by bringing new people into it. Third, people in a democracy are often called upon to be problem solvers.

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